

### *Teague Invited Laguna Governor Antonio to Testify in Congressional Hearing*

Washington, DC – On Thursday, Harry Teague welcomed Laguna Pueblo Governor John Antonio to the nation's capital to testify at a hearing on a bill, introduced by Teague, that aims to expedite the cleanup of old uranium sites and create jobs in southern New Mexico. The legislation to make all Surface Mine and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) funds eligible for the remediation of old uranium mines and mills was discussed at a hearing held by the Energy and Mineral Resources subcommittee of the Committee on Natural Resources. In addition to testimony from Teague and Governor Antonio, the hearing featured representatives from the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement as well as the Colorado Department of Natural Resource.

"We need to address the legacy of contamination at uranium mines and mills in southern New Mexico, and this legislation does that in a common-sense way that also creates over 1,000 good jobs in rural New Mexico," said Harry Teague. "Passing H.R. 4817 will help people in New Mexico, in Cibola County and McKinley County and across the state. That's why I'm proud to join with the delegation bring this bill forward, because it's the right thing to do for the people we represent.

The legislation, which is co-sponsored by Congressmen Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan, would make \$14.5 million in existing SMCRA funds available for use to clean the 137 uranium sites across the state that need remediation. According to the Department of Interior, a state cannot use certain SMCRA funds for uranium site remediation until the state has certified that all coal remediation has been completed. Congressmen Teague, Lujan and Heinrich introduced the legislation to make all SMCRA funds available to uranium sites immediately because uranium clean-up is a bigger need in the state.

The bill quickly gained support both by local leaders in Cibola and McKinley counties, where many of the sites in need of remediation are located, as well as in the business community with the support of the Association of Commerce and Industry of New Mexico (ACI). Laguna Governor John Antonio, an early proponent of the legislation, joined Teague to voice his support for the bill and the benefits it would bring to southern New Mexico and Cibola County.

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“The Jackpile-Paguate Mine, once the world’s largest open pit uranium mine, is just 30 yards from the Paguate Village and despite our efforts to reclaim the mine after it closed, it continues to have deleterious impacts on the long-term health and environment of the Pueblo. While we have tried to clean up the mine with our own resources, this SMCRA legislation would go a long way to helping the tribe reclaim that area and improve the environment that our families live in,” said Laguna Governor John Antonio. “Congressman Teague has been a great asset and valued friend to the Pueblo of Laguna and I appreciate the support and work that he has done to help pass this legislation.”

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